

PART

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DEVICE FOR HOLDING SEMICONDUCTOR WAFER

Technical Field

The present invention relates to a device for holding a semiconductor wafer and more particularly to a wafer holding device which is well suited for application to apparatus for performing a heat treatment on semiconductor wafers.

Background Art

In the process of semiconductor wafer fabrication, various heat treatments are performed on semiconductor wafers. Included among such heat treatments are mainly the formation of oxide films, the epitaxial growth by chemical vapor deposition (CVD) process, the dopant diffusion process and the gettering heat treatment. In the apparatus for effecting the heat treatment on semiconductor wafers, a semiconductor wafer is first placed on a substrate holder such as a board or susceptor disposed in a given position within a heat treatment furnace e.g., oxidation furnace or epitaxial growth furnace. Then, the required gas is introduced into the furnace and the wafer is heated to 1000 °C or over in the gaseous atmosphere, thereby performing the heat treatment corresponding to the process.

For instance, in the case of of the silicon epitaxial growth process by the H-Si-Cl type CVD process, generally the following steps are performed. The wafer is loaded on an SiC-CVD susceptor (usually a graphite material subjected to a CVD coating with SiC) within the chamber which is heated by a radiation type heater and a silicon source gas of SiCl_4 , SiHCl_2 , SiH_2Cl_2 , SiH_4 or the like is supplied by means of a hydrogen carrier. Thus, an epitaxial film is grown on the wafer through an H-Si-Cl type reaction.

Where the wafer is horizontally loaded on the susceptor and a heat treatment e.g., an epitaxial growth process is effected, the outer peripheral surface on the back side of the wafer is brought into substantially uniform contact

with the susceptor. In fact, however, the surface of the commonly used SiC-CVD type susceptor has a limit to the degree of smoothness due to its manufacturing process and it is a rough surface. This rough surface involves a large number of irregular projections on the susceptor surface and these projections support the wafer from the back side in a point contact manner.

Thus, in the conventional apparatus, the wafer is supported by the plurality of nonuniform projections with the result that the back side of the wafer is loaded locally. Particularly, where the projections contact with the semiconductor wafer at its weak portions from the physical property point of view, the wafer undergoes stress so that under the high temperature environment during the performance of the epitaxial growth process there is the danger of causing a so-called slip defect which in turn causes the crystal to suffer a slip deformation with the resulting occurrence of minute irregularities on the wafer surface.

Particularly and recently, in the case of large-diameter semiconductor wafers of 400 mm or over in diameter, the weight of the wafer itself has the effect of increasing the local loading acting on the points of contact of the wafer with the projections and thus the problem of stress on the wafer is no longer ignorable.

On the other hand, apparatus of vertical type have been known in which a semiconductor wafer is held on a vertical or oblique susceptor and is subjected as such to the desired heat treatment. Such vertical-type apparatus for performing a heat treatment on a semiconductor wafer requires no wide space for installation thereof and is used in the case where the installation site for the apparatus is limited. Particularly, where a heat treatment is to be performed on semiconductor wafers of large diameters on the order of 400 mm in diameter which have recently been manufactured experimentally, the horizontal type apparatus requires an excessively large installation space than in the case of wafers of the ordinary size and thus it is desired that the heat treatment be effected by the vertical type apparatus. In such vertical type apparatus, a susceptor is formed with a recess (spot facing) for receiving a semiconductor

wafer and the wafer is received in the recess thereby holding it to prevent its dropping from the susceptor.

However, the conventional vertical type wafer heat treatment apparatus involves the following problems. That is, the semiconductor wafer is not always positively made fast in the recess of the susceptor. Thus, there is the danger of the wafer falling down or dropping from the susceptor during the performance of a heat treatment.

On the other hand, in the wafer heat treatment apparatus of the horizontal type as well as the single wafer processing type, the desired heat treatment is performed while rotating the wafer together with the susceptor in the circumferential direction so as to ensure uniform heat distribution and film formation distribution for the wafer on the susceptor. Also, in the case of the vertical type wafer heat treatment apparatus, the wafer must be rotated in the circumferential direction for the same reason as just mentioned. In the case of the vertical type apparatus, however, if the wafer is rotated together with the susceptor, the wafer is moved relative to and within the recess of the susceptor due to such external force as the gravity acting on the wafer. Thus, the wafer strikes against the inner wall surface of the recess or falls from the susceptor thereby causing flaws, cracks or the like on the wafer due to the impact shock of the collision or dropping. If the heat treatment is performed on the wafer having the resulting flaws, cracks or the like, crystal defects are caused and the quality of the semiconductor wafer is deteriorated.

In order to prevent this, it is conceivable to fixedly support the wafer within the recess of the susceptor or on the susceptor. In this case, however, there is the problem that the wafer suffers an excessive force through the supporting members due to such external force as the gravity acting on the wafer and thus flaws, cracks or the like are caused on the wafer. In addition, there are problems such as the occurrence in the wafer of crystal defects due to the distortion by thermal deformation. These are serious problems, particularly in the

case of large-diameter semiconductor wafers.

Disclosure of Invention

In view of the foregoing deficiencies, it is the primary object of the present invention to provide a device for holding a semiconductor wafer, which is capable of ensuring that a heat treatment is effected satisfactorily without causing a slip defect or the like in the wafer. Also, it is another object of the present invention to provide a device for holding a semiconductor wafer, which is capable of ensuring that where a heat treatment is performed on a semiconductor wafer while holding it in a vertical or inclined manner, the wafer is held positively to prevent it from falling down from a susceptor and thereby to enhance the quality of the semiconductor wafer. It is still another object of the present invention to provide a device for holding a semiconductor wafer, which is capable of ensuring that where a heat treatment is performed on a semiconductor wafer while holding it in a vertical or inclined manner, the heat treatment is performed while preventing the wafer from colliding due to its movement or dropping and rotating the wafer in the circumferential direction thereby producing the high-quality semiconductor wafer.

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a wafer holding device adapted for use in an apparatus for treating a principal surface of a semiconductor wafer under a predetermined heating condition while the back surface of said principal surface of the wafer is held by the device at a predetermined position within a chamber of said apparatus, said device comprising:

a susceptor formed in the surface thereof with a wafer loading area for supporting the back surface of the wafer, and

a plurality of support pins respectively disposed in four equiangularly spaced positions along the circumference of at least one concentric circle in said wafer loading area so as to protrude from said susceptor surface and support the

back surface of said wafer at the forward ends thereof and including a resilient mechanism, respectively.

In this invention, the semiconductor wafer is supported at at least four points protrusively disposed in the susceptor surface.

It is to be noted that, if an attempt is made to simply support with the four projections, in fact a three-point support results and eventually the local loading is increased at these supporting points, thereby increasing the stress in the semiconductor wafer.

In accordance with the present invention, however, the wafer is not only supported by the support pins arranged at the four equiangular intervals on the same circle, that is, at the angular intervals of 90 degrees in the circumferential direction, but also each of the support pins includes the resilient mechanism, and therefore the wafer can be supported uniformly by all of the support pins.

In other words, even when the wafer is first mounted on the susceptor so that the back surface of the wafer touches and contacts with the forward ends of the two or three support pins, these support pins are sunken by the resilient mechanism upon the addition of the weight of the wafer. As a result, the forward ends of all the support pins come into contact with the back surface of the wafer.

Each of the support pins reacts on the back surface of the wafer by the spring force of the resilient mechanism. Eventually, the loading of the wafer balances the spring force of the support pins and the wafer is supported uniformly and stably by the whole support pins. Thus, in accordance with the device of the present invention, the semiconductor wafer can be supported uniformly at the four points at the least so that as compared with the conventional device which inevitably provides only a three-point support, the stress caused in the semiconductor wafer will be reduced and a slip defect or the like will not be easily caused during the heat treatment such as epitaxial growth process.

According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, said support pins are disposed in the positions which support the wafer along the

crystal orientation $\langle 110 \rangle$ with respect to the crystal plane (100) of the wafer.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present invention, said resilient mechanism includes a flexible member adapted for supporting the respective support pins.

In general, the semiconductor wafer is a silicon wafer substrate cut along the crystal plane (100). In this case, it has been known generally that in the surface the mechanical strength is highest at those positions along the crystal orientation $\langle 110 \rangle$ and the mechanical strength is lowest at the positions corresponding to the crystal orientations [001] and [010].

Assuming that the support pins of the device according to the present invention support along the crystal orientation $\langle 110 \rangle$ in the back surface of the semiconductor wafer, the wafer is supported at least at the four locations of the highest mechanical strength from the physical property point of view thereby supporting the wafer more stably. This is particularly advantageous in the case of those wafers which are great in weight and large in diameter.

It is to be noted that the crystal orientation $\langle 110 \rangle$ means the crystal orientation [110] and those which have the common properties from the crystal structural point of view and are thus equivalent to the former in the cubic system such as a silicon single crystal. More specifically, those shown in the following table 1 are meant.

Table 1

	Orientation
A	$[1\ 1\ 0]$
B	$[\bar{1}\ 1\ 0]$
C	$[1\ \bar{1}\ 0]$
D	$[\bar{1}\ \bar{1}\ 0]$
E	$[0\ 1\ 1]$
F	$[0\ \bar{1}\ 1]$
G	$[0\ 1\ \bar{1}]$
H	$[0\ \bar{1}\ \bar{1}]$
I	$[1\ 0\ 1]$
J	$[\bar{1}\ 0\ 1]$
K	$[1\ 0\ \bar{1}]$
L	$[\bar{1}\ 0\ \bar{1}]$

For instance, in the above Table 1 the crystal orientations designated respectively as E, F, G and H are the equivalent orientations to the crystal orientation $[110]$ and these orientations are not only lying in the radial directions of the semiconductor wafer but also spaced apart from one another by an equal angle of 90 degrees in the circumferential direction of the wafer. Thus, where the positions corresponding to any one of these four orientations on the wafer back surface are selected as the desired supporting positions by the support pins, by setting the other supporting positions to the other positions at angular intervals of 90 degrees on the susceptor, they can easily be made the corresponding positions along the previously mentioned orientations on the wafer back surface.

Also, the semiconductor wafer is usually provided with a marking such as an orientation flat or orientation notch indicating the $\langle 110 \rangle$ orientation in the principal surface of the wafer. Thus, by making use of such marking, it is

possible to easily effect the desired positioning on the susceptor in such a manner that the supporting positions on the wafer back surface of the selected support pins coincide with any one of the previously mentioned orientations E, F, G and H.

Also, it is needless to say that the local loading is reduced and the stress in the wafer is decreased with increase in the number of the support pins provided on the susceptor. In this case, it is only necessary to select as a basis an arrangement in which the support pins protrusively disposed at angular intervals of 90 degrees along the circumference of a plurality of concentric circles are at the positions corresponding to the four $\langle 110 \rangle$ orientations and are arranged radially within the wafer surface.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the resilient mechanism includes a flexible member adapted for supporting the respective support pins.

In this case, since the flexible member is used as the resilient mechanism for the support pins, there is the effect of simplifying the construction. The reason is that even if the support pins themselves are of rigid nature, using the construction in which the support pins are supported by the flexible member has the effect of providing the respective support pins with a spring force.

The suitable materials for the flexible member include, for example, a quartz plate which bends slightly under an external force. More specifically, it is possible to construct so that the quartz plate is arranged on the lower surface side of the susceptor and the support pins protrusively disposed at the desired positions on the quartz plate are fitted through the susceptor to project from its surface. In another exemplary construction, recesses or blind holes are formed at the desired positions in the surface of the susceptor and projecting members serving as the support pins are respectively fitted in the holes with the backup leaf springs made from quartz.

Of course, in the present invention the resilient mechanism of the support

pins is not limited to the constructions using such quartz springs and any other constructions can be used satisfactorily provided that when holding a semiconductor wafer by a susceptor during the performance of the heat treatment such as an epitaxial growth process, support pins are made resilient so that the wafer can be supported uniformly and safely by all the support pins.

Thus, by virtue of the construction of the device according to the present invention in which a semiconductor wafer is supported by the support pins provided with the resilient mechanism, a uniform support at four or more positions can be attained. Therefore, as compared with the conventional cases of support using only three points, there is the effect of reducing the local loading at the supporting locations, reducing the stress in the wafer and greatly decreasing the danger of the occurrence of a slip during heat treatment of the wafer.

Further, by arranging the supporting positions of the support pins to lie along the crystal orientation $\langle 110 \rangle$ in the wafer cut along the crystal plane (100), the wafer is supported at the locations where the mechanical strength of the wafer is highest so that even if the wafer is large in diameter and weight, it can be supported stably with the reduced stress.

Also, in accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a device for holding a semiconductor wafer, which is adapted for use in an apparatus for treating a principal surface of the wafer under a predetermined heating condition while the back surface of the principal surface of the wafer is vertically or obliquely held by the device at a predetermined position within a chamber of said apparatus, said device comprising:

- a substrate holder for supporting the back surface of said wafer thereon,
- rotating means for circumferentially rotating said wafer along with the substrate holder, and

- a plurality of holding members provided on said substrate holder and placed in contact with the peripheral edge of said wafer loaded thereon, said holding members being adapted to act against said peripheral edge of said wafer

to exert a holding force toward the center of said wafer in such degree that said wafer is not allowed to come off from its position even though the wafer is rotated along said substrate holder by said rotating means.

In the description of the present invention, the term "such degree that the wafer is not allowed to come off even though it is rotated" means that the wafer ^{Off force} can be held in position by a force which opposes the external forces such as the force of the gravity acting on the wafer and the thermal stress, during its rotation. For instance, this can be achieved by exerting the actuating force tending toward the center of the wafer upon the wafer peripheral edge.

The holding members exerting such holding force may for example be composed of resilient members made from such material as a thin quartz, SiC or the like or members including such resilient members.

According to the second aspect of the present invention, since the holding members hold the wafer in position by causing a holding force opposing the external forces, etc., applied to the wafer to act on the peripheral edge of the wafer, the wafer can be held positively while being held in a vertical or inclined manner. Thus, during the performance of a heat treatment, the wafer can be prevented from falling down or dropping from the substrate holder. Also, when the wafer is rotated by the rotating means, the holding force by the holding members can oppose the external forces, e.g., the force of gravity acting on the wafer and the thermal stress, and therefore the wafer can be prevented from coming off or moving on the substrate holder. As a result, it is possible to avoid shock due to the dropping or the collision against any other member due to the movement and hence it is possible to produce the high-quality semiconductor wafer having no crystal defect caused therein.

According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes holding members which contact with the peripheral edge of the wafer loaded on the holder and exert a holding force of such order

that the wafer is not allowed to come off even if it is rotated while being held vertically or obliquely at the desired position within the heat treatment apparatus.

In this case, if the substrate holder is installed in a vertical or oblique manner, the holding members prevent the wafer from falling down or dropping from the substrate holder. Also, even when the wafer is rotated, it is possible to prevent the dropping or movement of the wafer and thereby to prevent the occurrence of crystal defects in the wafer.

According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes an inner wall surface facing the peripheral edge of the wafer loaded on the holder, and said holding members include contact members for contacting with the peripheral edge of the wafer and energizing members disposed on said inner wall surface for applying a force tending toward the center to the contact members.

In this case, the energizing members disposed on the inner wall surface of the substrate holder cause the energizing force tending toward the center to act on the contact members. This energizing force acts on the peripheral edge of the wafer through the contact members. As a result, the wafer can be positively held at its peripheral edge by the contact members and the energizing members of the holding members. Thus, the vertically or obliquely held state of the wafer can be maintained stably and the falling down of the wafer or its dropping from the substrate holder can be prevented. Also, even if the wafer is rotated by the rotating means, the external forces such as the force of gravity acting on the wafer is absorbed by the energizing force from the energizing members through the contact members, thereby preventing the wafer from coming off or dropping from the substrate holder or preventing the wafer from moving and colliding against the inner wall surface of the substrate holder. Accordingly, it is possible to prevent the occurrence of crystal defects by the shock due to the dropping or collision thereby producing the high-quality semiconductor wafer. Also, even if the wafer is thermally deformed, the contact members and the wafer are brought

into close contact positively by the energizing force thus maintaining the holding condition.

It is possible to use, for example, resilient members, e.g., springs made from such materials as thin quartz and SiC for the energizing members. As for the contact members, it is possible to use, for example, members made from such materials as carbon SiC-CVD coated material, SiC material, quartz, etc. Also, the energizing member and the contact member can be combined as a unit. In this case, there is the advantage of eliminating the need to separately prepare the two members and reducing the production cost of the apparatus.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes an inner wall surface facing the peripheral edge of the wafer mounted thereon, and holding members for contacting with the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and exerting a holding force of such degree that the wafer is not allowed to come off the holder even if the wafer is rotated while being held vertically or obliquely at the desired position within the heat treatment apparatus, and the holding members include contact members for contacting with the peripheral edge of the wafer and energizing members disposed on said inner wall surface to respectively apply an energizing force tending toward the center to the contact members.

In this case, where the substrate holder is held vertically or obliquely in position, the falling down or dropping of the wafer is prevented by the inner wall surface, the contact members and the energizing members. Also, even if the wafer is rotated, the dropping or movement of the wafer can be prevented thus avoiding the occurrence of crystal defects.

According to still another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes an inner wall surface facing the peripheral edge of the wafer mounted thereon, and said holding members include inner-wall contact members composed of a part or the whole of the plurality of sections forming the inner wall surface, and energizing members for energizing the inner-wall contact

members toward the center.

In this case, the energizing members cause an energizing force tending toward the center to act on the inner-wall contact members composed of a part or the whole of the plurality of sections of the inner wall surface of the substrate holder. This energizing force acts on the peripheral edge of the wafer through the inner-wall contact members. In other words, an energizing force due to the surface contact of the inner-wall contact members acts on the peripheral edge of the wafer. Thus, in accordance with this embodiment the semiconductor wafer can be more positively held by the inner-wall contact members and the energizing members than in the case where an energizing force by a point contact acts on the wafer. As a result, the maintenance of the vertical or inclined state of the wafer is made more stable thus making it possible to prevent the falling down or the dropping of the wafer from the substrate holder. Further, even if the wafer is rotated by the rotating means, the external forces e.g., the force of gravity acting on the wafer is absorbed by the energizing force of the energizing members acting through the inner-wall contact members, thus making it possible to prevent the rotating wafer from coming off and dropping from the substrate holder or the movement of the wafer. Thus, it is possible to avoid the occurrence of crystal defects due to the shock by the dropping or collision and thereby to produce the high-quality semiconductor wafer. Also, even though the wafer undergoes a thermal deformation, the energizing force brings the inner-wall contact members and the wafer into close contact more positively thereby making possible the maintenance of the holding condition.

Resilient members such as springs made, for example, from the materials including thin quartz and SiC may be used for such energizing members.

Also, the wall surface of each recess provided in the substrate holder may be used as the inner-wall contact members.

Thus, in accordance with this embodiment the inner-wall contact members of the holding members constitute a part of the inner wall surface of the substrate

holder and therefore there is no need to produce the two members separately with the resulting reduction in the production cost of the apparatus.

According to still another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes an inner wall surface facing the peripheral edge of the wafer mounted thereon, and holding members adapted to contact with the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and exert a holding force of the order that the wafer is not allowed to come off even if it is rotated while being held vertically or obliquely at the desired position within the heat treatment apparatus, and said holding members include inner-wall contact members composed of a part or the whole of the plurality of sections of said inner wall surface, and energizing members for energizing said inner-wall contact members toward the center.

In this embodiment, where the substrate holder is held vertically or obliquely, the falling down or dropping of the wafer can be prevented by the inner-wall contact members and the energizing members. Also, even though the wafer is rotated, the occurrence of crystal defects due to the dropping or movement of the wafer can be prevented.

According to still another preferred embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a wafer holding device adapted for use in an apparatus for treating a principal surface of a semiconductor wafer under a predetermined heating condition while the back surface of said principal surface of the wafer is vertically or obliquely held by the device at a predetermined position within a chamber of said apparatus. The device comprises a substrate holder for supporting the back surface of said wafer thereon and rotating means for circumferentially rotating said wafer along with the substrate holder. The substrate holder includes a peripheral edge contact portion adapted for contacting with at least the back surface side of the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer, and the holding members include clamping members adapted for contacting with the principal surface side of the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and for clamping and holding the wafer between the same and the peripheral edge

contact portion.

In this embodiment, the holding members include the clamping members adapted for contacting with the principal surface side of the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and for clamping and holding the wafer between the same and the peripheral edge contact portion. As a result, clamping forces tending toward the inside act on the wafer from the principal surface side of the peripheral edge and the substrate holder side. By virtue of the clamping forces,

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the wafer can be positively held on the substrate holder at its peripheral edge and hence the wafer can be positively maintained in the vertical or inclined condition. Thus, the wafer can be prevented from falling down or dropping from the substrate holder. Further, even if the wafer is rotated by the rotating means, the external force such as the force of gravity acting on the wafer can be prevented by the clamping forces from the clamping members thereby preventing the wafer from coming off and dropping from the substrate holder as well as the movement of the wafer. Thus, it is possible to avoid the occurrence of crystal defects due to the shock by the dropping or collision and thereby to produce the high-quality semiconductor wafer. Further, even if the wafer is thermally deformed, the substrate holder and the wafer can be positively held in close contact by the clamping forces thereby maintaining the holding condition.

As for example, such clamping members can be provided by forming resilient members of such material as thin quartz or SiC into arcuate shape so as to clamp the wafer and the substrate holder by the ends of the respective resilient members.

According to still another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the substrate holder includes a peripheral edge contact portion for contacting at least the back surface side of the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer, and holding members adapted to contact with the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and exert a holding force of such degree that the wafer is prevented from coming off even if it is rotated while being held vertically or obliquely at the desired position within the heat treatment apparatus, and the holding members include clamping members adapted for contacting with the principal surface side of the peripheral edge of the mounted wafer and for clamping and holding the wafer between the same and the peripheral edge contact portion.

In this embodiment, when the substrate holder is installed vertically or obliquely, the falling down or dropping of the wafer is prevented by the clamping members. Also, even though the wafer is rotated, the occurrence of crystal

defects due to the dropping or movement of the wafer can be prevented.

Thus, this embodiment has the effect that since the substrate holder includes the holding members which are adapted to contact the peripheral edge of the wafer mounted on the holder and exert a holding force of such degree that the wafer is prevented from coming off even though it is rotated by the rotating means, the holding of the semiconductor wafer on the substrate holder is made positive and the occurrence of crystal defects due to the falling down or dropping of the wafer in the course of heat treatment is prevented thereby producing the high-quality semiconductor wafer.

Further, this embodiment has the effect that even if the heat treatment is performed while rotating the semiconductor wafer held in position vertically or obliquely, the occurrence of collision with any other member due to the movement of the wafer or the dropping thereof can be prevented thereby producing the high-quality semiconductor wafer.

The above and other features and advantages of the present invention will be understood more clearly from the following description of the preferred embodiments referring in conjunction with the accompanying drawings which are shown for illustrative purposes only without any intention to limit the scope of the invention.

Brief Description of Drawings

Fig. 1 is a perspective view showing schematically the construction of a wafer holding device according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagram in vertical sectional view showing schematically the construction of an epitaxial growth furnace equipped with the wafer holding device shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a partial sectional view showing schematically, with the omission of the hatching, the construction of a wafer holding device according to another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a diagram in vertical sectional view showing schematically the construction of a vertical-type epitaxial growth furnace equipped with a wafer holding device according to still another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 5 is an enlarged front view of a susceptor, contact members and resilient members according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 6 is a diagram in vertical sectional view showing schematically the construction of a vertical-type epitaxial growth furnace equipped with a wafer holding device according to still another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is an enlarged front view of a susceptor and resilient members according to still another embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 8 is a partial enlarged sectional view of a susceptor and resilient members according to still another embodiment of the present invention.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

A first embodiment consists in an epitaxial growth furnace equipped with a wafer holding device according to the present invention. The epitaxial growth furnace of the first embodiment is a horizontal-type epitaxial growth furnace for growing an epitaxial film on the surface of a semiconductor wafer while holding the wafer in a horizontal position, and its schematic construction is shown by the sectional view of Fig. 2. As shown in Fig. 2, the horizontal-type epitaxial growth furnace 201 of this embodiment includes a reaction chamber 2, a wafer holding device 206 for holding a semiconductor wafer W within the chamber, a reaction gas injector port 15 for supplying a reaction gas into the chamber, a reaction gas vent port 17 for the suction exhaust of the gas within the chamber, and infrared lamps 13 for heating the chamber interior to the desired temperature. The wafer holding device 206 of this embodiment utilizes a quartz plate for its resilient mechanism. As shown in Fig. 2, the wafer holding device 206 includes a susceptor 207 mounted within the chamber 2 and a quartz plate 204 coaxially disposed on the lower surface of the susceptor 207. As shown in Fig. 1, a

plurality of support pins 205 are disposed on the upper surface of the quartz plate 204 to protrude therefrom. On the other hand, the susceptor 207 is formed with holes 203 therethrough so as to coincide with the arrangement of the support pins 205. The support pins 205 are respectively inserted into the corresponding holes 203 so that the forward ends of the pins 205 project from the surface of the susceptor 207.

In order to support the wafer W along the four orientations lying on the wafer back surface side and respectively designated as E, F, G and H in Table 1, four units of the support pins 205 are protruded from the surface of the susceptor on three concentric circles in the wafer holding area at regular angular intervals of 90-degrees. In this embodiment, every four of the pins are arranged on each of three concentric circles. Therefore, every three of the pins are arranged on each of the radii corresponding to the previously mentioned four orientations, thus arranging the twelve support pins 205 in total.

When mounting the wafer W on these support pins 205, usually use is made of a marking e.g., an orientation notch N formed at the position corresponding to the 110 orientation. More specifically, the wafer W is mounted in such a manner that the direction of the straight line connecting the notch N and the center of the wafer W is brought into registration with one of the four rows of the radially arranged support pins 205 and the center of the wafer W is made coaxial with the susceptor 207. When the wafer is mounted in this way, the four rows of support pins 205 respectively support the wafer W along the four orientations on the back surface of the wafer W.

It is to be noted that the support pins 205 are protrusively disposed on the quartz plate 204 having flexibility even a bit so that the load or weight acting on the support pins 205 is dispersed until the loading action and the reaction of the supporting side are balanced by the elasticity of the quartz plate 204. As a result, when the wafer W is mounted on the support pins 205, the wafer W is eventually supported uniformly by all the support pins 205.

With the epitaxial growth furnace 201 equipped with the wafer holding device 206 constructed as described hereinabove, the epitaxial growth process is performed in the following manner.

The wafer W which has been preliminarily subjected to the desired processes including the removal of surface oxide film and polishing, is transferred to the loading position of the susceptor 207 within the chamber 2 by a robot arm (not shown). At this time, as mentioned previously, the wafer W is loaded on the susceptor 207 such that while aligning the direction of the notch N of the wafer W with one of the four rows of the support pins 205, the supporting positions by the four rows of support pins 205 are respectively brought into coincidence with the four orientations E, F, G and H on the wafer back surface.

Then, the interior of the chamber 2 is closed and heated up to about 1100 °C to 1200 °C by the infrared lamps 13.

Thereafter, a reaction gas e.g., SiCl_4 , SiHCl_2 , SiH_2Cl_2 , SiH_4 , or the like is introduced from the reaction gas injector port 15. At this time, as the result of the thermal decomposition or reducing action of the reaction gas, an epitaxial film is grown on the principal surface of the wafer W thereby producing an epitaxial wafer.

During the performance of the epitaxial growth process of the present embodiment, the wafer W is supported uniformly by the large number of support pins 205, and more especially the wafer is supported stably at those locations where the mechanical strength of the wafer is highest from the physical property point of view. Thus, as compared with the conventional cases of supporting at three points only, the local loading at the respective supporting points is reduced and the stress applied to the wafer W is decreased considerably. Therefore, the danger of causing a slip defect due to the stress is also decreased greatly.

An epitaxial growth furnace using a wafer holding device according to a second embodiment will now be explained. This wafer holding device includes resilient mechanisms which are different from that of the first embodiment and the

construction is shown by the partial sectional view of Fig. 3. It is to be noted that the second embodiment is the same with the first embodiment except the wafer holding device so that only the construction of the wafer holding device is shown and the explanation of the remainder is omitted. In the second embodiment, spherical support pins 223, each of which is formed by a ball, are arranged on the surface of a susceptor 220 and it is assumed that these support pins are arranged in the same manner as the support pins of the first embodiment.

The wafer holding device of the second embodiment includes a resilient mechanism at the position of each of the spherical support pins 223 in the susceptor 220. More specifically, as shown in Fig. 3, formed at the desired positions of arrangement of the support pins on the surface of the susceptor 220 are a plurality of blind holes 221 which are stair-shaped in section. A leaf spring 222 made from quartz is fitted on the stairs of the inner wall of each hole 221 so as to close it. An opening is provided in the center of each leaf spring 222 and the spherical support pin 223 is disposed in the opening in a manner that its lower part is fitted therein. As a result of this construction, the spherical support pins 223 are respectively supported by the flexible leaf springs 222.

Also, the upper ends of the spherical support pins 223 are slightly projected from the surface of the susceptor 220 thereby supporting the wafer W through the point contact therewith. When the wafer W is loaded on such susceptor 220, the wafer W is supported uniformly by virtue of the elasticity of the leaf springs 222 of all the spherical support pins 223.

Further, as in the case of the first embodiment, by placing the supporting positions of the spherical support pins 223 in coincidence with the four orientations E, F, G and H, respectively, on the wafer back surface, the wafer W is supported stably at the locations where the mechanical strength is highest.

With the epitaxial growth furnace equipped with such holding device, the local loading at the supporting points of the respective spherical support pins 223 is also reduced and the stress caused in the wafer during the performance of the

epitaxial growth process is also reduced, thereby decreasing the danger of the occurrence of a slip.

It is to be noted that while, in the embodiments described above, the total of twelve (12) support pins, three (3) pins each, are respectively arranged along the four radial directions, it is of course possible to arrange the decreased or increased number of support pins. Particularly, where it is desired to hold a wafer having much weight e.g., a large-diameter wafer of more than 400 mm in diameter, it is desirable to uniformly support the wafer with a greater number of support pins, and moreover it is desirable to use as a basis a support pin arrangement which supports along the crystal orientations $\langle 110 \rangle$.

An epitaxial growth furnace according to a third embodiment will now be described. The epitaxial growth furnace of the third embodiment is used for growing an epitaxial film on the principal surface of a semiconductor wafer while holding the wafer vertically and its schematic construction is shown in Fig. 4. As shown in the figure, the epitaxial growth furnace 1 of this embodiment includes a reaction chamber 2, a susceptor 3 serving as a substrate holder for holding a semiconductor wafer W within the chamber 2, a holder 9 for holding the susceptor 3 in place, rotary drive means 11 for rotating the susceptor 3 with the wafer W held thereon, a reaction gas injector port 15 for supplying a reaction gas, a reaction gas vent port 17 for the suction exhaust of the gas within the chamber, and infrared lamps 13 for heating the chamber interior to the desired temperature.

The susceptor 3 is vertically mounted on the susceptor holder 9 within the chamber and it is rotatable in the circumferential direction of the susceptor by the rotary drive means 11. A recess is formed in the surface of the susceptor 3 and the wafer W is received in the recess 4. Fig. 5 illustrates an enlarged front view showing the manner in which the wafer is received in the recess 4 of the susceptor 3 of this embodiment. As shown in Fig. 5, four resilient members 7 and 8 made from thin quartz or SiC material are mounted on the inner wall of the recess 4 of the susceptor 3 at 90-deg intervals with respect to the central angle

of the wafer. Of these, each of the three resilient members 7 is of a compressed type spring composed of stacked thin plates. The remaining resilient member 8 has an arcuate shape and its elastic force is produced by its expansion and contraction in the radial direction. A contact member 5 of carbon SiC-CVD coated type or made from SiC or quartz is fitted on the forward end of the compressed springs 7 and the arcuate spring 8, respectively. The contact members 5 support the peripheral edge of the wafer set in the recess 4. More specifically, the wafer W set in the recess 4 is supported at its peripheral edge by the contact members 5 which are energized from the outside of the peripheral edge toward the center of the wafer by the spring force of the four springs, that is, the compressed springs 7 and the arcuate spring 8. It is to be noted that while, in this embodiment, the compressed springs 7 and the arcuate spring 8 are used in combination, it is needless to say that use can be made of such construction in which all the resilient members are composed of the arcuate springs 8 or all the resilient members are composed of the compressed springs 7 as well.

Now, the method of growing an epitaxial film on the wafer surface by utilizing the epitaxial growth furnace 1 constructed as above mentioned will be explained.

The semiconductor wafer which has been preliminarily subjected to the processes including the removing of surface oxide film, polishing etc., is first transferred to the mounting position of the susceptor 3 in the chamber 2 and it is then set in the recess 4 of the susceptor 3.

At this time, the peripheral edge of the wafer W is supported by the four contact members 5. The wafer W which has been set in the recess 4 and supported at its peripheral edge by the four contact members 5, is energized from the outside of the peripheral edge toward the center by virtue of the spring force of the compressed springs 7 and the arcuate spring 8.

As a result, the wafer W held in a vertical manner is positively held in the recess 4 of the susceptor 3 due to the support by the contact members 5 and the

energization toward the center provided by the springs 7 and 8, thereby preventing the falling down or dropping of the wafer from the susceptor 3.

Thereafter, the interior of the chamber 2 is closed and the interior of the chamber is heated up to about 1100 °C to 1200 °C by the infrared lamps 13. At the same time, the wafer W is rotated, along with the susceptor 3, in the circumferential direction by the rotary drive means 11. At this time, the peripheral edge of the wafer W is supported by the contact members 5 and the contact members 5 are energized from the outside of the peripheral edge toward the center by the springs 7 and 8, with the result that the external force such as the force of gravity acting on the wafer during the rotation is absorbed by the spring force of the springs 7 and 8. As a result, the movement of the wafer W within the recess 4 is prevented by the springs 7 and 8. In other words, there is the effect that the wafer is prevented from moving within the recess 4 and colliding with the inner wall or dropping from the susceptor 3 during its rotation.

Then, a reaction gas e.g., SiCl_4 , SiHCl_2 , SiH_2Cl_2 , SiH_4 or the like is introduced from the reaction gas injector port 15. At this time, an epitaxial film is grown on the principal surface of the wafer W due to the thermal decomposition or reducing action of the reaction gas, thereby producing an epitaxial wafer.

Next, an epitaxial growth furnace according to a fourth embodiment will be described. Fig. 6 illustrates a diagram in vertical sectional view showing the schematic construction of the epitaxial growth furnace 1 according to the fourth embodiment. The epitaxial growth furnace 1 of this embodiment is identical with that of the third embodiment except only the susceptor and the resilient members so that the common parts are designated by the same reference numerals and their explanation is omitted.

Fig. 7 illustrates an enlarged front view of the susceptor 3 in the fourth embodiment. The susceptor 3 includes the recess 4 for receiving a semiconductor wafer and the inner wall of the recess 4 is formed so as to internally contact with the peripheral edge of the wafer. Also, as shown in Fig. 7,

the susceptor 3 is divided into eight sector supporting portions 6 which are constructed so as to be movable in the radial direction of the semiconductor wafer.

The springs 7 made from thin quartz or SiC thin plates are mounted, one for each sector supporting portion, between the outer wall of the susceptor 3 or the peripheral edge portions of the sector supporting portions 6 and the susceptor holder 9. Thus, the wafer W set in the recess 4 is supported at its peripheral edge by the stepped portions of the sector supporting portions 6 or the inner wall of the recess 4, and the sector supporting portions 6 are respectively energized from the outside of the peripheral edges toward the center by the spring force of the springs 7.

As a result, the wafer W held vertically within the chamber 2 is firmly held in the recess 4 owing to the support by the stepped portions of the sector supporting portions 6 (the inner wall of the recess 4) and the energization toward the center by the springs 7, thereby preventing the falling down or dropping of the wafer. Also, when the wafer is rotated in the circumferential direction, the external force such as the force of gravity acting on the wafer during the rotation is absorbed by the spring force of the springs 7. Thus, the movement of the wafer within the recess is prevented by the springs 7, thereby preventing the wafer from moving within the recess 4 and colliding against its inner wall or dropping from the susceptor 3 during the rotation.

Next, an epitaxial growth furnace according to a fifth embodiment will now be described. The epitaxial growth furnace 1 of this embodiment is identical with that of the third embodiment except the susceptor 3 so that the common parts are designated by the same reference numerals and their explanation is omitted. Fig. 8 is a partial enlarged sectional view showing schematically the construction of the susceptor 3 in the fifth embodiment. The susceptor 3 includes the recess 4 for receiving a semiconductor wafer. Mounted on the susceptor holder 9 are arcuate springs 8 which are made from thin quartz or SiC and arranged at

90-deg intervals with respect to the central angle of the wafer so as to respectively clamp and energize the corresponding peripheral portions of the wafer and the susceptor 3 toward the center with the wafer being received in the recess 4 of the susceptor 3. Due to the fact that the arcuate springs 8 clamp the peripheral portions of the wafer and the susceptor 3, the wafer is positively held on the susceptor 3, thus preventing the wafer from falling down or dropping. Also, even if the wafer W is rotated, the external force e.g., the force of gravity is absorbed by the arcuate springs 8 owing to the spring force thereof so that the wafer is prevented from moving within the recess 4 and colliding with its inner wall or dropping from the susceptor 3 during the rotation.